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SRNT Position Statement on Philip Morris External Research Program

To: SRNT Members

From: SRNT Policy Committee

Summary

Philip Morris recently announced an External Research Program to support tobacco and nicotine research. We have many questions about its intent, review process, and independence allowed funded researchers. Thus, although we realize that some researchers have few avenues for research funding in tobacco or nicotine, SRNT does not
endorse the PM program as a legitimate source of funding for scientific research.

Discussion

One concern arises from the history of Philip Morris in which research findings were often used to confuse rather than clarify and thereby undermine efforts to decrease tobacco use. A major goal of SRNT (that all members affirmed in joining) is to foster research "for the prevention and treatment of cigarette smoking and tobacco use." Consist with this, pharmaceutical company research programs explicitly state that their research is to develop products to increase smoking cessation. In contrast, the goals of the PM research program are to address "concerns of the health community" and the development of PM products. This is of special concern because the PM document never acknowledges that tobacco use causes lung cancer, dependence, etc. or that the most direct means to reduce tobacco-caused disease is to reduce tobacco use. To us, this suggests the goal of the research is not to decrease tobacco use. Another concern is the funding mechanism is a contract, not an unrestricted grant. This system may allow Philip Morris to unduly

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influence the conduct of the research. We are concerned about this given the well-documented instances of misuse of scientific data by the tobacco industry (see JAMA, Vol 274, No 3 and Vol 280, No 13 as well as Glantz, Cigarette Papers). Thus, given the history of the industry, it may be that the only ethical mechanism for such a research program is that it be administered, not by the industry, but by a third party.

Some SRNT members may have submitted letters of intent for the November 1 deadline. We encourage these members to reexamine the application and to review some of the past efforts of the tobacco industry to support research (e.g the CTR).

Note: This statement has been approved by the SRNT Exec Comm.

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